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A

LETTER

TO

The Right Honourable

GROCER.

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A

LETTER

TO

The Right Honourable

GROCER.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

An ESSAY on the ORIGIN of PENSIONS in *England*.

Inscribed to

A Newly created BARONESS.

By a LIVERYMAN and GROCER.

——— "REM *facias* REM
"*Recte si possis, si non, quocunque modo* REM.

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AN

ESSAY

ON THE

Origin of PENSIONS.

WE read in the moſt antient ſtates, that whenever a perſon diſtinguiſhed himſelf in the ſervice of his country, his grateful fellow-citizens were ſure to confer ſome public mark

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mark of honour as a reward for his merit, and allowed particular privileges to him and his poſterity.

The Romans carried this principle of patriotiſm to the greateſt height; and we frequently find, in the infancy of the republic, that a parcel of oak leaves have been given to him who was fortunate enough to ſave the life of a fellow-citizen, as the greateſt recompence of his heroiſm.

If a General was victorious, he was allowed a triumph, put into a certain vehicle, not much unlike our modern waſhing-tubs, and drawn through a crowd of admiring ſpectators, attended by a parcel of conſtables,

ſtables, who were alſo citizens and ſoldiers, but not then diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of train-bands; a ſet of people who had no other advantage over the militia of theſe days, than the utmoſt willingneſs to face their enemies.

A hot-headed chap, who had beat the Volſcians, was diſtinguiſhed by the name of Coriolanus; and in ſucceeding ages, the title of Imperator was generally beſtowed upon a ſucceſsful Commander.

After the reduction of Britain by the Romans, and after we were beaten out of barbariſm by that civilized nation, we began to ſtudy their language, and adopt their manners;

ners; for before the invaſion, we had no other diſtinctions but two words, which are at this day known to ſome people by the names of Honour and Honeſty. Honour was the daughter of Honeſty, begot by Principle, and bred up by Virtue; ſhe was a young woman of ſo pleaſing an appearance, that ſhe was followed by the men, and copied by the women; to be good was the only nobility, and the different orders of rank were proportioned to the degrees of perfection.

Dr. Garth, in his Claremont, very happily deſcribes the manners of our anceſtors in thoſe primitive days of innocence and virtue. If

I do not very much miſtake, he ſays,

Of Spaniſh red unheard of was the name,
For cheeks were only taught to bluſh by ſhame;
Honour was plac'd in probity alone,
For villains wore no title but their own.

However, we began to adopt the cuſtoms of our conquerors, and our patriots were not above receiving a proper mark of the public eſteem for their ſervices. An antient author, whoſe name I have forgot, and it would not be of three halfpence ſignification if I did not, ſays, that a very great favourite of

 the

the people was once preſented with a bunch of turnips, and the nobility, not to be outdone in generoſity by their inferiors, unanimouſly voted him a leg of mutton, but made a proviſo in the grant, that he ſhould find butter and caper ſauce himſelf.

But a ſucceſſion of ages produced a difference of thinking, and greatly poliſhed the original ruſticity of our manners; there was a neceſſity for the invention of ſomething to obtain the convenience of life, and a particular occaſion to have it of ſo portal a nature, that enemies of their country might receive a certain gratuity for the betraying the truſt of the people

people without being publickly diſcovered, and univerſally deſpiſed for their corruption and venality: after a good deal of conſultation and debate, we produced a ſpecies of coin in imitation of the Romans, which has been handed down to this day, and is now publickly known by the name of money.

Perhaps ſome ſenſible antiquarian may remark, that our anceſtors had a number of coins before the invaſion of the Romans, and that I am very little acquainted with the braſs or copper pieces of our prudent forefathers; he is welcome, ſo he gives me leave to ſay what I pleaſe; he may think what he

pleaſes, and call me his very humble ſervant.

From this invention of money, our nobility began to grow cold to the public intereſt, and the commons weary of it; every man prudently conſidered himſelf, and judiciouſly thought his own welfare was his more immediate concern; ſo that bunches of turnips, or legs of mutton, were no longer accepted by the great, or offered by the lower claſs of people. But the value of half a crown, or ſo, was ſure to make a nobleman, of the venal caſt, as complaiſant at that time, as it would now the footman of a man of quality after dinner.

The

The enemies of the conſtitution, for the credit of thoſe days be it ſaid, were not however the only perſons conſidered: If a man had been remarkably ſerviceable to his country, and a favourite of his Prince, he had the higheſt mark of munificence from the one, and the moſt pleaſing addreſſes of gratulation from the other---twenty ſhillings a year was ſettled upon him, perhaps for life, and he was allowed the firſt cut at every public entertainment.

Thus we proceeded from age to age, ſtill encreaſing in the value of our penſions, till, in a late reign, a miniſter received a greater ſalary for

for diſcontinuing to oppoſe the happineſs of his country, than any other perſon obtained for promoting it.

A

LETTER

TO

The Right Honourable

GROCER.

A

LETTER

TO

The Right Honourable

GROCER.

On this foundation would I build my fame,
And emulate the Greek or Roman name:
Think England's peace bought cheaply with my blood,
And die with pleasure for my country's good.
ROWE.

DEAR BROTHER,

IF Mr. Rowe was just, in observing a real patriot should die for the interest of his country, I fancy he might have also remarked, it would have

been

been much more neceſſary for him to have lived for it.

The Greeks and Romans were a little too haſty, in my opinion; for if, inſtead of falling upon the point of a ruſty ſword, they had perſevered in the reſiſtance they made to arbitrary meaſures, in all probability they might have happily ſucceeded, and reſtored their bleeding country to its original ſtate of tranquility.

Mr. Addiſon has put an expreſſion into the mouth of his Cato, wherein he ſays,

I ſhould have bluſh'd if Cato's
houſe had ſtood ſecure,
And flouriſh'd in a civil war.

By

By which we may underſtand, that that great man could by no means reconcile a deſertion of the public at the time they ſtood in moſt need of his aſſiſtance; much leſs the ſmalleſt encreaſe of his fortune, as the purchaſe of forſaking them.

Different people, however, have different opinions; and no man can take upon him to ſay how he would have acted in another perſon's place, unleſs he had in reality been in the ſame ſituation. Every man is undoubtedly the beſt judge of his own motives; and if the uniform tenor of his conduct has been juſt and upright, a particular circumſtance

ſhould never make us change our opinions, unleſs we are abſolutely convinced of his reaſons.

Juſt, however, as this obſervation may be, there are a multitude of little minds generally buſy in making ill-natured ſtrictures on the conduct of their ſuperiors, and take a malicious ſatisfaction of aſſigning any reaſon for the ſeeming inconſiſtency of their behaviour, but the real one.

Difficult as it is to ſteer through the channel of life without forfeiting the eſteem of the world, it muſt certainly be a great conſolation to an ingenuous mind, to be convinced, that though he may have incurred

incurred the diſpleaſure of the public by an extraordinary behaviour, he is fortunate enough not to deſerve it.

In public ſtations, the characters of the beſt are liable to inſpection; and the more exalted the rank, the more ſevere the examination.

But when a man has done his utmoſt in the ſervice of his country, when he has preſerved her happineſs, chaſtiſed her enemies, and raiſed her reputation, the moſt enthuſiaſtic republican can by no means ſuppoſe, but a proper concern for the honour and welfare of his family ſhould not be a very material part of his concern.

Ay,

Ay, but ſays a malicious world, ---might not the intereſt of his family been as well conſulted by a continuance in the very employment by which he deſerved ſo ſignal a mark of royal approbation, and by which he might likewiſe have an opportunity of receiving a ſtill greater token of regard?

Why, pray, what is that to the world?---ſuppoſe he thought proper to retire from buſineſs---ſuppoſe his health was impaired---ſuppoſe he wanted no further proviſion for his family---ſuppoſe he was not pleaſed at the reſolutions taken with regard to the intended war with Spain, of the neceſſity of which he

was

was abſolutely convinced---ſuppoſe any of theſe ſuppoſitions, and pray in what manner can his conduct be arraigned for making uſe of that freedom which the meaneſt of the people imagine they have ſo great a right to aſſert?---Is he not an Engliſhman? has he not an undoubted liberty of acting as he pleaſes? and ſhould we not be thankful for the ſervices he has done, inſtead of being angry that they are not continued?

Ay, but when the welfare of his country principally depended upon the abilities of a particular perſon, no other motive, no other conſideration ſhould be put in competition with it; and the reigning principle of

of every man ſhould be, a regard for the intereſt of the public.

Mighty pretty, truly! the public are very much concerned about the intereſt of itſelf; but why, in the name of common ſenſe, ſhould not individuals be equally ſollicitous about theirs? If this maxim is ſo neceſſary for the ſafety of the community, why ſhould it not be equally neceſſary to private perſons? Let me aſk one queſtion---Does the general complaint of the behaviour of a certain great man, in his reſignation, proceed ſo much from what we may ſuffer, as an agregate body; or does it principally ſpring from the reaſonable fear every ſingle

gle perſon may have of being affected himſelf.

Very conſiſtent, indeed, that every body ſhall have a right of conſulting his own ſatisfaction, but he, who has the greateſt title to every indulgence.---Let me aſk any one perſon in the kingdom, if a plentiful fortune was offered him for life, for doing what his own inclinations might poſſibly prompt him to, if he would look upon himſelf as bound in honour or duty to refuſe it?

Or if I have received a particular obligation from any body, inſtead of that gratitude neceſſarily due on the receipt of a favour, would

it be reaſonable to quarrel with a friend becauſe he did not ſtill think proper to oblige me?

What has been ſaid with regard to the concern of private people, may, without impropriety, be obſerved with reſpect to public employments; though it muſt be allowed, that the man who would preſerve an opinion of his integrity, ſhould never give the leaſt occaſion to ſuſpect it; and if there were any particular reaſons that might induce him to an extraordinary method of acting, the juſtice due to his own character ſhould oblige him to declare them.

Not-

Notwithſtanding that motive for an explanation of his conduct, there is ſtill a juſtice due to the community, which the greateſt of its members have a right to obſerve, and from which no conſideration in nature can poſſibly diſcharge them.

This duty is ſtill more incumbent on thoſe perſons who have voluntarily accepted of employments, where the general intereſt is materially concerned, and who have more noble opportunities of conſulting the welfare of the public; and if they have accepted of thoſe places with chearfulneſs, have a right to diſcharge them with honour.

From theſe conſiderations therefore, brother, though every man in ſome particulars has a right to the diſpoſal of his abilities, or the employment of his time; yet this is one of the circumſtances where no excuſe can poſſibly acquit him.

The pilot would have but a poor excuſe for leaving a veſſel in a dangerous channel, becauſe it was the general opinion of the crew it was not ſafe to venture through it, tho' he himſelf, from ſtudy and experience muſt be well convinced of the practicability.

Ill grounded as popular complaints may generally appear, yet upon the preſent

preſent ſubject, the kingdom cannot but greatly regret the loſs of thoſe abilities which have added ſo much to its reputation, and the juſt opinion that was conceived of them needs no other proof than the general diſſatisfaction.

When we had the greateſt hopes, by a proper exertion of talents ſo ſuperior, to ſcourge the inſolence of our perfidious enemies, and to fix an honourable and advantageous peace, to be deprived of them, muſt be a matter of real concern to every well-wiſher of his country; more eſpecially as the enemies of the public favourite are but too ready to encourage ſuſpicions not greatly to the honour of his character.

For

For this reaſon we cannot help lamenting the fatality of thoſe circumſtances which deprived us of ſo faithful and able a miniſter, and wiſh we could make his enemies believe the real cauſe of his reſignation were the motives publickly aſſigned.

For our own parts, we are fully ſatisfied with his conduct, and ſincerely applaud his reſolution in the quitting an employment he was not allowed any longer to conduct with reputation to himſelf, or with credit to the nation; we are highly ſenſible of the greatneſs of his ſervices, and ſhall ever remember them with the deepeſt gratitude.

Con-

Conſcious of the injuſtice done to the beſt of characters, we are only concerned that appearances are ſaid to make againſt it; and ſenſible of the greatneſs of his integrity, we are ſorry any perſon can be baſe enough to ſuſpect it.

The ſpontaneous marks of royal munificence, we are aſſured, were never more happily diſpoſed; and we are convinced, no perſon was more properly calculated to deſerve them.

A world, naturally cenſorious, will embrace every opportunity of blackening the name of merit; and it is with the utmoſt anxiety we obſerve,

ſerve, the greateſt number of the people take hold of this occaſion.

From the impoſſibility of removing public prejudices without a public vindication, the neceſſity of this letter will ſufficiently plead its excuſe: the author is happy if he can be in the leaſt inſtrumental in juſtifying a name he muſt always admire; or in recovering an individual from the error of an opinion founded alone upon calumny and ill-nature.

He would gladly wiſh a more able pen had undertaken the defence of a character ſo ſeverely treated; and cannot again help declaring

claring his concern for ſo great an inſtance of ingratitude.

But time, he is convinced, will make every body well acquainted with his motives, and ſhew how far the aſſertions of his enemies have been juſtly grounded.

POSTSCRIPT.

AS in the courſe of the foregoing letter, no reaſons have been given, either in regard to the neceſſity of a Spaniſh war, or the expediency of continental connexions; it may be proper, in this place, to give the opinion of the public upon a ſubject which has already, moſt worthy Brother, been honoured with your own.

You are undoubtedly right, in aſſerting, that the inſolence of the Spaniards, in preſuming to meddle in a general pacification, or in appearing the profeſſed friends of our preſent enemies, ſhould be ſeverely ſcourged for that, will not only enhance the reputation of the kingdom, and provide a maintenance abroad for a number of people who could not poſſibly exiſt at home, but give the nation an opportunity of throwing away ſome thouſand burthenſome lives, and unneceſſary millions of money with which ſhe is already pretty much incumbered: beſides, had a certain reſignation not happened, the public would have the greateſt room to

ſhew

ſhew their regard to a Right Hon. Perſonage, by their readineſs in ſubſcribing any conſiderable ſums for which there could not be the ſmalleſt occaſion.

With reſpect to continental connexions, you are moſt certainly right; the Engliſh nation has been, for a long time, as much diſtinguiſhed for its generoſity, as eminent for its valour; and it certainly is the buſineſs of every lover of his country, to omit no opportunity of exerciſing either. The leſs our intereſt is advanced by our German connexions, the more our generoſity is raiſed; and the more lives that are loſt, in defence of a country with which England has no manner of concern, the

the more ſhe enhances her character of bravery.

Let it be the buſineſs of other kingdoms to engage in wars from principles of found policy and government; but let it be our's to proceed from no other motives but a real regard to the intereſt of our friends, and a generous inattention to our own.

From this it muſt evidently appear, that the commencement of a Spaniſh war, and the continuation of a German one, are eſſentially neceſſary to the preſervation of our national characteriſtics; and that every real lover of his country ſhould with-

withdraw from any employment, in which he was not allowed to profecute the one with ſpirit, and continue the other with vigour.

FINIS.